

Meeting Minutes for Special Joint City Council, Planning Commission Meeting,
October 29, 2002, Belmont Senior and Community Center, 1223 Ralston
Avenue, Belmont.

SPECIAL MEETING: 7:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL (COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION)

Councilmembers Present: Metropulos, Cook, Wright, Warden

Councilmembers Absent: Bauer

Planning Commissioners Present: Mathewson, Torre, Feierbach, Frautschi,
Gibson

Planning Commissioners Absent: Weichia, Parsons

Staff Present: City Manager Kersnar, City Attorney Savaree, Community
Development Director Ewing, Recording Secretary Kern

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Recording Secretary Kern

PUBLIC/COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Warden invited comment on anything not on the agenda. There was
no response to this invitation.

**DISCUSSION OF COMMUNITY VISIONING AND LONG-RANGE
PLANNING.**

Community Development Director Ewing presented four long-range planning
opportunities: 1). City-wide visioning and general plan update; 2). Issue-
specific policy projects; 3). Area-based planning for Downtown; and, 4).
Site-specific projects, and requested Council's direction.

Community Development Director Ewing explained that a comprehensive
General Plan update would have a long-term payoff and cover a wide range
of issues. He said a visioning would gather a host of city issues together to
determine what the common values were, which would ultimately lead the
community in one direction. These values would then make up our General
Plan for land use, circulation, traffic, open space, conservation, emergency
preparedness, recreation, parks and any other issues the city is involved in.

Community Development Director Ewing stated that the Policy Projects option covers individual projects, which may not be coordinated with each other. The payoff could be immediate, but tend to take a long time to solve the problem they set out to solve.

Community Development Director Ewing explained that the Downtown/Economic Development option would be a comprehensive study of Downtown, focused on a particular area. The results would likely be sooner than a General Plan Vision. He said this would be the most direct way to effect economic development issues.

Community Development Director Ewing stated that the individual projects option was site-specific projects that are completed in a short period of time and show immediate results.

Community Development Director Ewing stated that if no clear direction were given the staff would continue to work on small projects. He said that the current economic slowdown was an excellent time to plan for the future and comprehensive planning would be successful if a broad community outreach effort was promoted. A clear commitment from the Council was needed to overcome the fears of going forward with this comprehensive planning effort.

Community Development Director Ewing stated that the staff recommended a General Plan/Vision effort. He explained that the General Plan was out of date and there was an economic opportunity to do it now. He said this would allow the coordination of policies and projects to realize the community identity, and allows projects to move forward that Council wishes to be part of the structure.

QUESTIONS TO STAFF

In answer to Planning Commissioner Gibson, Community Development Director Ewing explained that any future annexations could be included in a General Plan update. He said some of the current Specific Plans could be brought forward depending on the results of the visioning process

Planning Commissioner Torre asked how long a General Plan and a Downtown Plan would take to complete? Community Development Director Ewing stated that a General Plan would take one and a half to three years, and a Downtown Plan would take one to two years.

C. Warden asked if the General Plan update could be started with a focus on the Downtown. Community Development Director Ewing stated that this could be accomplished.

C. Wright wondered if a study of Downtown could begin, once the visioning process had been completed. Community Development Director Ewing stated that this made sense to do it this way.

In response to Planning Commissioner Frautschi, Community Development Director Ewing explained that there is \$300,000 from building permit fees currently available to do a General Plan update. He estimated that a full General Plan/Visioning effort would cost around \$250,000 over three years.

Community Development Director Ewing stated that a moratorium could be put in place, if the Council wanted to hold off projects going forward until the advance planning was complete.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS

Planning Commissioner Torre stated that this economic slowdown was an opportunity to do a General Plan, but she felt that if there wasn't a commitment to do it well, it should not be considered. She said there was a great deal of interest in doing a Downtown Plan, and in combination with that, she would like to look at issues related to rehabilitation of neighborhoods, and all the policies that would affect reconstructing homes in 40 year old neighborhoods.

Planning Commissioner Gibson stated he would like to focus on the Downtown and a General Plan update.

Planning Commissioner Frautschi ranked the options he would like completed: Block four, General Plan, and then focus on Downtown/Visioning. He said he thought the Downtown Plan was a valid plan, and could be integrated into a new General Plan update. He said he thought the Block four report could be incorporated into a Downtown Specific or General Plan.

Planning Commissioner Feierbach stated she would like Block four completed first and thought that the visioning process could begin in the Downtown. She said the Specific Plan for Downtown had not addressed El Camino, Old County Road, Ralston from Old County Road to Hiller Street and the Harbor Industrial Area, which she thought, should be considered in the planning for Downtown. Planning Commissioner Feierbach said she thought that house sizes should be considered Citywide, and traffic should to be addressed with any of the studies that are done.

Planning Commissioner Mathewson stated that once the visioning process began, the City must be willing to accept whatever develops from this process. He said he thought the General Plan was still usable, and wished it was referenced more during Planning Commission deliberations.

Commissioner Mathewson said he would like to do a full General Plan, but first focus on Block four as a cornerstone for the Downtown. He said he thought the information that had been gathered in past studies could be incorporated into a new plan.

Planning Commissioner Feierbach said that the Community Development Director Ewing had mentioned a software program that develops various hardscape and landscape scenarios and she thought this would be an excellent tool to use during the visioning process. She said she thought that City needed to hire an Economic Developer for the City.

CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS

C. Wright stated that he would support a General Plan process with visioning included. He said the timing was perfect with the economic slowdown. He said he agreed that with reinvestment and expansion of homes continuing, the city would be better off with a plan. He said he thought the two top reasons communities supported a Downtown was; 1). Downtown defines a community; and, 2). citizens view Downtown as a gathering place. C. Wright suggested a parallel process to do a General Plan visioning process before the Downtown plan was started. He suggested a one day workshop with specific projects to focus on. He said that he would support any project on the public side that leveraged private investment. He explained that the City had already committed to under grounding the utilities on Old County Road and he thought this project would promote private investment when finished. He noted that the old City Hall site would probably fit with what was designed in a downtown plan, so we would resist putting everything on hold while the planning process takes place. A second criteria that he supported was how to facilitate private development, currently in place, that would likely fit with a plan. He said the owner of Belmont Hardware, which generates sales tax, was willing to commit and reinvest in Downtown. He said that if this project were facilitated with an Economic Developer, it would send a message and if there were three or four projects like this, the message would be clear that this was a place to do business. C. Wright said he supported a General Plan process with a focus on Downtown, and to invest some time in determining what the priorities were for a Downtown.

C. Metropulos stated he supported a General Plan process with a visioning component, with an emphasis on Downtown, to include Old County Road, down Ralston Avenue to Hiller Street. He said he was a strong proponent of

hiring an Economic Development Director. C. Metropulos said there was an opportunity to develop the hardware store and other projects, and he thought this person could be helpful providing continuity with the North side and South side of Ralston Avenue.

C. Cook said she thought it was difficult to redefine the community because it was so eclectic.

She said she was in support of a General Plan update, but agreed that it should begin with the visioning process. She said she liked the idea of beginning the Downtown component as a parallel process. C. Cook stated that much of the Downtown was private, and these owners needed to be folded into our vision of what was needed for our Downtown.

C. Warden stated that he thought the City should conduct a visioning process. He said this process should not be political, it should be a community process. He said the vision of the City must come from the residents, not the Council, and the Council must be brave and listen to these ideas. C. Warden said he would include the whole Redevelopment Area in the Downtown Study. He said that once the vision process had begun, the Downtown component should be started, and considered the most important. He agreed that an Economic Development person should be hired to help throughout the process.

C Wright explained an idea that may be of benefit to the community visioning process. He said he thought a Town Hall meeting using a software package used for audience polling, asking specific questions, and using that data during the rest of the process would create interest and focus for the residents that could not be involved in a long process.

City Manager Kersnar noted that this process needed to involve as many residents as possible to be successful.

Community Development Director Ewing reported that he had heard consensus from Council to begin the Visioning process, then begin Downtown component, and make this a part of a General Plan process. He explained that he would like to hold a couple of workshops on the Visioning process, and one on what economic development would entail, so that Council would have a better idea what programs staff would be putting together.

ADJOURNMENT at this time, being 8:15 PM.

George Metropulos

City Clerk Pro Tem

Meeting recorded and videotaped

Tape No. 538